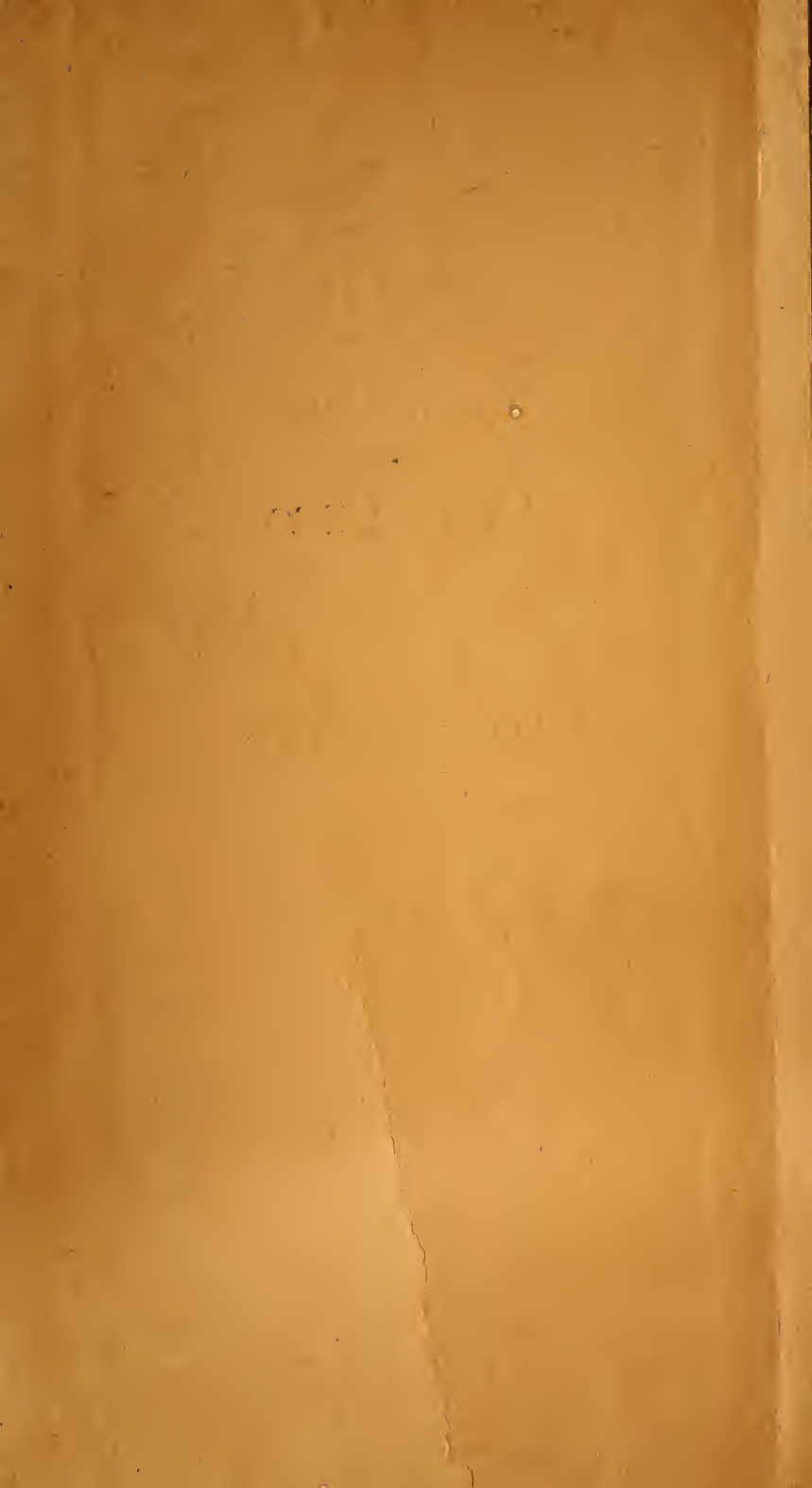


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City Document.—No. 2.

ADDRESS OF THE MAYOR,

TO THE

CITY COUNCIL OF BOSTON,

JANUARY 7, 1839.



PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE COMMON COUNCIL.

BOSTON:

JOHN H. EASTBURN, CITY PRINTER,

No 18 State Street.

1839.

CITY OF BOSTON.

In Common Council, January 7th, 1839.

On motion of Mr. Gordon,

ORDERED, That Messrs. Gordon, Thayer and Wells, be a Committee to request of the Mayor a copy of the Address delivered by him before the City Council, this day, and that said Committee cause the usual number of the same to be printed for the use of the Council.

Attest,

RICHARD G. WAIT, *Clerk C. C.*

A D D R E S S .

UNEXPECTEDLY called again to meet the City Council, at the beginning of a new term of service, I cannot forbear to congratulate you, Gentlemen, on the general prosperity which prevails at the present time in the City, and which has been gradually augmenting, till, from a low point of depression, we have reached that state of active and successful exertion, of which the effects are now so happily visible around us. The crisis through which we have passed has been a lesson of prudence, which may and should be of great value to the community, both politically and commercially, as the disasters we have experienced were clearly attributable to mismanagement of both public and private interests. The sphere of duty of the City Government, however, cannot affect the causes either of our past distress or our present prosperity; and I refer to them merely as likely to have an important bearing on those projects of public improvement, which have been long in contemplation, as well as those which have been more recently suggested. No time would seem more suitable than a period of advancing activity, and apparently durable prosperity, for undertaking those works of utility, convenience or ornament, which may be considered desirable. The first of these works, as well in importance as in the length of time it has been under examination and discussion, is that by

which a supply of soft water may be brought from the vicinity into the City.

On this topic I can add nothing to what I have said on former occasions. I have uniformly expressed the opinion, that it is now the interest of the City, and will soon become a matter of necessity, to introduce such a supply of water. The sources from which a sufficient quantity can be obtained are well known, and have been thoroughly examined by skilful engineers; and although the commissioners appointed by the City Government have not agreed in opinion as to which of two sources is the *best*, yet they have satisfactorily demonstrated that either of the two is not merely sufficient, but of remarkably fine quality. The question before the City Council is one which any person of practical judgment is competent to decide,—a question of expense merely. If it once be determined that it is expedient to introduce water, it cannot be deemed a proof of wisdom to hesitate long in the choice between two means of supply, of which either is unexceptionable. My efforts have been constant to promote the progress of an enterprize, which I deem so important for the true and permanent welfare of the City; and no future exertions will be spared on my part, to hasten the moment when the work shall be begun. It must be obvious, however, that till both branches of the City Council have formed a decisive opinion favorable to the project, no individual efforts can be successful. The appropriation of money is necessary, and that must be done by those who control that branch of the public service. The City Council of the last year directed me to make application to the Legislature, for the grant to the City of the powers necessary to bring the water from either of the two sources recommended by the commissioners. As the order was passed, however, near the close of the session of the Legislature, no action was had on the petition, which was immediately presented; and I have taken the course prescribed in the Revised Statutes, for bringing it to the early

attention of the Legislature, during their present session, by publishing the petition in the newspapers, and serving notice on all the towns interested in the subject.

The erection of a new City Hall is a business which has been referred to your consideration by the Council of last year, and which will claim much of your attention. Plans, models and estimates have been prepared, and the City is in possession of a piece of land which affords a very desirable location for such a building. I cannot but urge the subject upon your attention at an early period,—as I esteem the erection of a City Hall a work of very pressing importance,—not for the accommodation of the city officers, but for that of the public, and for the safe keeping of important records and other documents.

It is impossible that the public business should be done in the present confined apartments of the city offices, with as little delay and as much convenience, as if it were transacted in more spacious and suitable rooms; while no one can recollect the constant danger from fire to which the City Hall is now exposed, without the most serious anxiety for records of great historical and pecuniary interest. Some delay has arisen from doubts entertained as to the extent to which the City should purchase, in the immediate neighborhood of the land occupied by the old Court House; but when it is considered that any purchases by the City would always be at the disposal of the municipal government, if required for public purposes, and that some regard is due to the suitable appearance of a building of such size and degree of ornament, it will not be thought superfluous, I trust, for me to express the hope that in situation, as well as in beauty of structure, the new hall may be worthy of the taste and wealth of the City, and that it may be found compatible with a just economy to provide for its being surrounded by sufficient space to secure to it an abundance of air and light, and to afford proper views of the edifice to those who pass in its vicinity. Whenever a new City Hall shall be erected, it

will be necessary to provide for the accommodation of the Probate Office, and the Registry of Deeds, which are now in the old Court House. By a recent purchase the City has obtained possession of the estate known as the Museum estate, and after throwing into the street all that is requisite for public use, there will be left a sufficient quantity of land for the erection of the fire proof building necessary for the safe keeping of the immensely important documents of those offices.

Another building, the erection of which I have before recommended, still appears to me important in many respects. The improvements which, within a few years, have been introduced into the structure and discipline of penitentiaries, it is found by recent experience can be beneficially employed in County Jails. Hartford, in Connecticut, is now enjoying the advantages arising from the improved and admirable discipline and economy of the jail in that City. There is no doubt that similar benefits might be obtained in this county, by reconstructing the jail on the plan which has elsewhere proved so useful. I beg leave to invite your attention to this subject, and in connexion with it, to the disposition of the valuable estate on Leverett street, which is now used for no other purpose than the support of the jail. Should a portion of the property be sold, it might probably reimburse to the City the expense of a new building; and should the whole be disposed of, and the jail and jailer's house be erected on the City land at South Boston, there is little doubt that the exchange would leave a balance in the city treasury, and diminish materially the future current expenses of the establishment.

The House of Correction has been conducted the last year with the same skill and success which have heretofore distinguished the institution, and which, under the direction of the present overseers and master, have rendered it a model of the discipline that is most desirable in such establishments. The completion of the West Wing of

the building, for the imprisonment of females, and of a work-shop for their employment, has given additional facilities for the maintenance of correctional discipline and productive industry. A large number of the male convicts has been employed in the erection of the hospital for the Insane in the Houses of Industry and Correction, for which an appropriation was made the last year; and it gives me much pleasure to be able to state that this very desirable and important edifice has made great progress towards completion, on a plan, and in a style of workmanship, which leave nothing to desire in either respect. The probability now is that the building will be finished in the course of the next summer, and within the original estimates of its cost; and it will be honorable alike to the liberality of the City government, and to the judgment of those to whom its construction was confided. I will take this opportunity to suggest to the Council the propriety of an early appointment of a superintendent of this hospital, that as soon as it shall be ready for occupation, a competent person may be secured for the care of the patients. I will also call your attention to the propriety of applying to the Legislature for an act empowering the courts of the county to send lunatics to this hospital, instead of that at Worcester, and the House of Correction.

The other institutions at South Boston have pursued their usual course, and have produced, to a good degree, the effects for which they are designed, in alleviating the ills of poverty and restraining juvenile delinquency. The building erected by the City, a few years ago, for the accommodation of the children belonging to the House of Industry, and the Boylston Asylum, has become insufficient for the great numbers who have been crowded into it; and one consequence, perhaps, of the inadequate space and air, has been the breaking out of that distressing disease, the ophthalmia, which has been a very serious evil to the whole establishment, for several years past. By the vigorous and perse-

vering efforts of the Directors and the physician of the house, it has at length been partially subdued ; but the institution will very probably be liable to its recurrence, unless more space and better ventilation be secured to it. I esteem it my duty, therefore, to recommend the erection of another building, of at least equal size with that now used for the asylum.

The general health of the City has been remarkable during the year. Notwithstanding the great heat and copious rains of the summer and autumn, the health of the community has never been interrupted by infectious disease, and the bill of mortality shows an uncommon security of life in so large a population. This must be in part attributed to the excellent system of drainage, of sweeping and of collecting offal, which has long been pursued here, and has rendered the City distinguished for its cleanliness, and the purity and wholesomeness of its atmosphere ; a system which ought never to be abandoned, notwithstanding that it naturally occasions some controversies and embarrassment in its execution.

The public peace has also been uninterrupted during the past year, and it is a matter of sincere congratulation that the reputation of the City has suffered no such blow as was inflicted on it in the previous year. Great pains have been taken, and, it is believed, not without a good effect, to prevent the violation of the laws and ordinances, especially of those the violation of which has a tendency to the breach of the peace.

Another circumstance, for which the last year has been remarkable, is the exemption of the City from the destruction of property by fire ; the amount of loss since the first of January last being \$48,618 00, of which \$25,000 were lost at a single fire, about three weeks since. While we are grateful for this mercy of an over-ruling Providence, we must not be unmindful of the efficient services of those of our fellow-citizens whose particular task it is to contend

with this fearful enemy, and who have uniformly shown themselves prompt and able to check its ravages. It is the opinion of many whose experience gives weight to their judgment, that considering the increased number of reservoirs, the character, the alacrity and the discipline of the Fire Department, and the care exercised to keep the apparatus in good condition, the City was never better guarded against danger from fire than at the present time; so that the somewhat greater expenditure required by the existing system of the department may, perhaps, be compensated by additional security. It gives me great pleasure to bear testimony to the uniformly correct deportment of those who have charge of this important branch of the public service.

Another interest of the City, of greater moment than any I have mentioned, is that of public instruction. The school system of Boston has done more than any thing else to produce the character by which the City has long been distinguished; and as the population increases, it becomes of more and more importance that the system should be adhered to and improved. During the past year one new grammar school house has been erected at East Boston, and one in Bennet street has been rebuilt, of a larger size and better construction. Three others,—situated in Hawkins street, Mason street, and South Boston,—have been greatly improved in their internal arrangement; and a committee of the City Council have recommended that a sufficient sum be provided in the next annual appropriation bill, for the erection of another on the land belonging to the City, on Cooper street. Should this be done, the City will have fourteen grammar schools, capable of accommodating from six to seven thousand children, from seven to fifteen years of age. This may reasonably be expected to suffice for the present; and if suitable attention be paid to the wholesomeness of the rooms, and the school committee continue to exercise the vigilant care, and ever wakeful ambition for the improvement of the modes of instruction, which have of late years distinguished them, there will be little to be feared, unless it

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be an excess of intellectual excitement in the tender minds of the pupils. Besides the grammar schools, there are no less than eighty-five primary schools, for children from four to seven years of age, the rapid increase of which demonstrates at once the utility of the system, and the just appreciation of its advantages by the inhabitants. More than five thousand children are taught in these schools. Forty-two of the rooms in which they are instructed belong to the City, and it is of much importance that they should all be the property of the public, as they can then be constructed in a far better manner for the purpose than rooms in private houses. The annual appropriation for the erection of primary school houses has for several years past been \$12,500, and the gain of school rooms over the increase in the number of schools is so slow, that it may be deemed advisable to enlarge that appropriation till the supply of public rooms shall be more nearly adequate to the existing wants of the community.

Another appropriation which, in my judgment, it would be wise to increase, is that for the reduction of the City debt. Every year there appears in the annual accounts a provision for diminishing a debt, which, notwithstanding that provision, continues to increase. If it be proper that any such appropriation should be made, it is surely expedient that it should be effectual, and that in the course of years, there should actually be some reduction in the amount of debt. Otherwise it carries with it an appearance which certainly could never have been designed, of an attempt to disguise the facts in the case.

It is sometimes thought that the debt is increased by the extravagance of those who have the care of the public money; but so far as I am competent to judge of this point, I feel it no more than just to say that the charge seems to me without foundation. It is difficult to imagine that greater economy, or a stricter accountability could be introduced into the management of the public property; and if any one will examine the accounts he will immediately perceive that

the important items are for expenditures which must, to some extent, be continued, viz : for school houses and teachers ; for widening, paving, lighting, and cleaning the streets ; for the watch and the fire department :—in short, for things which are indispensable in all well regulated towns, and the cost of which must be expected to increase with the growth of the City. It is rare that any expensive enterprise is undertaken which has not been long and loudly called for ; and in all improvements in which we share the advantage with posterity, it seems reasonable that a certain proportion of the cost should find its way to the tax bills of the present generation, rather than that the whole should be put on the shoulders of our successors. If the consequence of such suggestions should be an increase of the whole tax of the City, I am persuaded that it would even then be found not to exceed that of other places of the same size, nor even of many towns in this vicinity. It is, however, scarcely probable that any increase would be necessary. If the deficiencies in valuation were corrected, it would probably swell the amount of tax without adding to the ratio. But it would be a very unnecessary timidity which would be restrained by the weight of the City debt, from prosecuting any improvement of which the benefit is unquestioned, from the fear of adding to our burdens. There is a large amount of property which has been created by the loan, the rents of which more than meet the interest ; and there is much of which we are in the daily use, for which, if we did not own it, we should be obliged to pay rent. All this ought to be offset against the debt ; but taking merely the rents derived from that portion of the City property for which a debt has been incurred, they pay somewhat more than half the interest of the whole debt. This is a virtual extinction of that amount ; and a debt of half its present nominal size is one of which the City need stand in no fear. Its disposable property will, if properly managed, be far more than sufficient to liquidate the whole.

I have thus, at some risk of incurring the charge of tediousness, expressed, as distinctly as I am able, my views on the topics of greatest interest to the City ; and I have only to assure you of my cordial co-operation in all you may undertake for the public good, whether it be in economy or in enterprize. I should be ungrateful if I did not acknowledge the indulgence shown to my past efforts by my fellow citizens ; and the only return I can make to them,—increased exertion to deserve their favor—shall not be wanting—and may God be with us as he was with our fathers.

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